

the
SONGS
of
RALPH
McTELL

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the
SONGS
of
RALPH
McTELL

Approximate playing time: 68 minutes.

Ralph McTell: vocals, acoustic guitar, & harmonica with appearances by Richard Thompson, Simon Nicol, Dave Pegg, David Swarbrick, Maartin Allcock, Phil Collins, Gerry Conway, Jerry Donahue, Alun Davies, and others

1. Summer Girls 3:05
2. The Girl From the Hiring Fair 4:45
3. Barges 4:00
4. Michael in the Garden 4:55
5. Tequila Sunset 3:20
6. Bridge of Sighs 4:55
7. Song for Martin 3:45
8. Throw Out a Line and Dream 4:10
9. The Setting 5:20
10. From Clare to Here 4:10
11. Mr Connaughton 3:40
12. Hands of Joseph 5:15
13. Stranger to the Seasons 3:25
14. Weather the Storm 4:05
15. The Ferryman 7:15
16. Streets of London 4:20

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RHR CD 86
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1. *Summer Girls***
 2. *The Girl From the Hiring Fair*
 3. *Barges*
 4. *Michael in the Garden**
 5. *Tequila Sunset*
 6. *Bridge of Sighs*
 7. *Song for Martin*
 8. *Throw Out a Line and Dream*
 9. *The Setting*
 10. *From Clare to Here*
 11. *Mr Connaughton*
 12. *Hands of Joseph**
 13. *Stranger to the Season*
 14. *Weather the Storm*
 15. *The Ferryman**
 16. *Streets of London*
-

Ralph McTell: vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica

All songs written by Ralph McTell, Misty River Music Ltd/PRS,
except tracks 3, 4, 15, and 16: written by Ralph McTell, Westminster Music/PRS.

* new recording ** previously unreleased track

Since his first recordings it has been Ralph McTell's song writing that has set him apart. This is not to take away from his rich, expressive voice and fluid guitar playing—both of which are outstanding and remarkable on their own. Nor does it take away from Mr. McTell the entertainer—a performer whose concert performances are as fine as any in the folk world. But there is a rare and unguarded humanity to his writing that touched listeners back then and still does—perhaps even more so in these days of widespread cynicism.

Ralph McTell's songs do not shy away from the realities of the world; they embrace them. Yet each one leaves its listener with an emotional lift and a greater optimism about the human condition. Often dealing with hard issues like unemployment, addiction, politics, homelessness, emigration, and the longings of childhood, they are ultimately about care and concern, friendship, love, remembrance, and acceptance. Each one possesses a hidden depth or subtle meaning that is revealed and enriched by subsequent listenings.

Interestingly enough, "*Streets of London*"—his most famous work and only the third song he wrote—didn't even make his first album as Ralph did not think it was good enough. It was recorded a year later and in 1974 became a hit around the world. Since then it has been covered or performed by over 200 artists as diverse as Aretha Franklin, Sinéad O'Connor, Bruce Springsteen, Harry Belafonte, Glen Campbell and the punk band Anti-Nowhere League. But as the remainder of this powerful collection bears testimony, "*Streets...*" is but one pearl in a shining strand. In no way does the McTell songbook begin or end here.

Of course, old fans of Ralph know all of this. This collection spanning his first 25 years is indeed a "silver celebration" and the first opportunity to hear these classics on one compact disc. But for those just discovering him, you are to be envied the most joyous experience of all—that of hearing Ralph and his magnificent music for the first time!

1. Summer Girls

A new song taken as a sample from McTell's most recent project (based on the life of Dylan Thomas) that was commissioned by BBC Radio. Many is the young man who, lacking confidence when hoping to meet the opposite sex, adds props or develops fake characteristics in order to impress. McTell meeting Catcher in the Rye, meeting the younger Dylan Thomas.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; bass: Maartin Allcock; orchestral arrangement: Graham Preskett.

2. The Girl From the Hiring Fair

This song of desire and youthful longing is self-explanatory and based on an imagined scenario in an English folk style. It has a happy or optimistic ending as opposed to many folk songs that always end in tragedy. It was written for Ralph's friends Fairport Convention appearing on their *Gladys' Leap* album and is one of Ralph's most covered recent songs. The folk story came to life recently when at a concert a lady came to meet Ralph and tell him that her grandparents met at a Hiring Fair.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; rhythm guitar: Alun Davies; bass: Maartin Allcock; drums: Gerry Conway; lead guitar: Jerry Donahue; keyboards & strings: Graham Preskett; backing vocals: Benny Gallagher.

3. Barges

A song written for Ralph's brother Bruce to remind them both of tranquil summer holidays when their own fatherless backgrounds were obliterated by days full of fishing, walking, and swimming from daybreak until after dark. They used to stay in the canal country of Oxfordshire in Banbury with a favorite uncle and aunt, not far from the studio where Ralph likes to record.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; second acoustic guitar: Alun Davies; string arrangements: Graham Preskett.

4. Michael in the Garden

No song of Ralph's has produced more letters of thanks and recognition than this, and it is constantly requested at concerts and broadcasts. It was written after hearing a description of a young man in an institution. The symptoms evoked would seem to be that of autism, a word unknown to Ralph at the time of writing. It was specially re-recorded for this album.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; bass & keyboards: Maartin Allcock.

5. Tequila Sunset

American "Singles Bars," where optimism grows stronger by the glass! This song is gleaned from fragments of conversations from places around Sepulveda Boulevard in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles, just up the road from Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Written in the period after the chart success when Ralph "dropped out" for awhile in America.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; bass guitar: Rod Clements; drums & percussion: Pick Withers; backing vocals: Tony Rivers, John Perry & Ken Gold; string arrangements: Graham Preskett.

6. Bridge of Sighs

This extended metaphor explored as a one-to-one relationship—are they gang bosses, religious leaders, generals of exhausted armies, lovers, husband and wife or even brothers? Is it Lebanon or Northern Ireland or just a rational plea for compromise before all they have loved is wasted and each party destroyed by vanity?

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; rhythm guitar: Alun Davies; bass: Maartin Allcock; drums: Gerry Conway; lead guitar: Richard Thompson; keyboards & strings: Graham Preskett.

7. Song for Martin

Heroin is a destroyer of people, friendships and love. This song is a gentle warning to another well meaning friend and is a true story of one of Ralph's busking mates from Croydon and Paris days.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; lead guitar: Phil Palmer; piano & Fender Rhodes: Billy Livesy; CS 80 synthesizer: Graham Preskett; bass: John Giblin; drums: Phil Collins.

8. Throw Out a Line and Dream

A yearning for Romanticism in a cynical world. Sadly so often two people see the same things from completely different perspectives: the one positive, the other negative.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; rhythm guitar: Alun Davies; bass: Maartin Allcock; drums: Gerry Conway; lead guitar: Jerry Donahue; keyboards & strings: Graham Preskett; backing vocals: Benny Gallagher.

9. The Setting

This song was inspired by the short stories of Sean O'Faolain and relates to Ireland's sad story of emigration. It was recorded by the Fureys on their album dealing with emigration, *The Scattering*. Unusual for a song on this subject, which often deals with the emigrant missing their home, this emotive treatment also considers the feelings of those left behind.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; rhythm guitar: Alun Davies; bass: Dave Pegg; Uilleann pipes: Tom Keane; keyboards & strings: Graham Preskett; backing vocals: Benny Gallagher.

10. From Clare to Here

A chance comment from one of Ralph's workmates on a building site, "it's a long way from Clare to here," in 1963 resulted in this song exploring the dilemma of the Irish laborer a long way from home. The song was written nine years later and has been much covered. The fact that it is so often believed by many to be a traditional Irish song pleases Ralph enormously although it often causes his publisher problems when it is wrongly listed as "TRAD." The high speed Fureys version with some different chords in the chorus seems to have won the popularity race in Ireland, where it has become a standard but this version is at the speed it was intended.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; string arrangement: Graham Preskett; bass guitar: Rod Clements.

11. Mr Connaughton

Growing up without a father meant that Ralph was fascinated by other kids' dads. Mr Connaughton was the young Irishman who lived with his wife in the flat above Ralph, sometimes finding time to spend with Ralph and his brother. The song was inspired when about 18 years later the "baby" girl in the song made herself known to Ralph after a concert.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; rhythm guitar: Simon Nichol; violin: David Swarbrick.

12. Hands of Joseph

This is another song that is popular in concert that has been specially re-recorded for this album giving McTell a chance to show off some guitar wizardry. It is dedicated to the hands of Joseph Spence, a unique guitar player from the Bahamas who has had a big influence on McTell's guitar style.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; acoustic bass, "bizarre" & mandolin: Maartin Allcock.

13. Stranger to the Seasons

The phrase, believed to be from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, was given to Ralph by his friend Billy Connolly when they were performing at the Belfast Festival. By chance, Billy saw on TV an Asian delegate to a political conference begin his passionate speech using the phrase. The song is an exploration of that statement.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell;
bass: Nigel Portman-Smith.

14. Weather the Storm

This song was written for a friend who came through a series of horrendous experiences. It has found strong echoes in many others who have written to Ralph to say that they have derived reassurance from it during their own troubles.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell;
keyboards & backing vocals: Peter Swettenham.

15. The Ferryman

Ralph's interpretation of *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, the book was given to Ralph by Bruce Barthol from the '60s West Coast band Country Joe and the Fish. Ralph was going through some troubled times and, at that time, if they did not work out your star sign and horoscope, West Coast musicians had a tendency to give you something to induce peace and Karma. In this case it was a book. The song is one of Ralph's personal favorites and was specially re-recorded for this album.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; string arrangements:
Robert Kirby; strings: Maartin Allcock.

16. Streets of London

The third song Ralph wrote (sadly as relevant today as it was when he wrote it in 1967/1968)—only just making Ralph's second album after producer Gus Dudgeon persuaded Ralph to include it. Above all others it has introduced thousands to the main body of McTells work and given him international recognition by achieving over 200 cover versions and selling more in sheet music than any other song since 1945. There are five versions of the song recorded by Ralph, this is the hit.

Acoustic guitar & vocals: Ralph McTell; bass: Rod Clements
backing vocals: Prelude.

Compilation: Ralph McTell & Michael J. McDonagh
Conformed at Livingston Studios, London
December 1991

Engineer: Ben Jones
New recordings cut at Woodworm Studios
Barford St. Michael

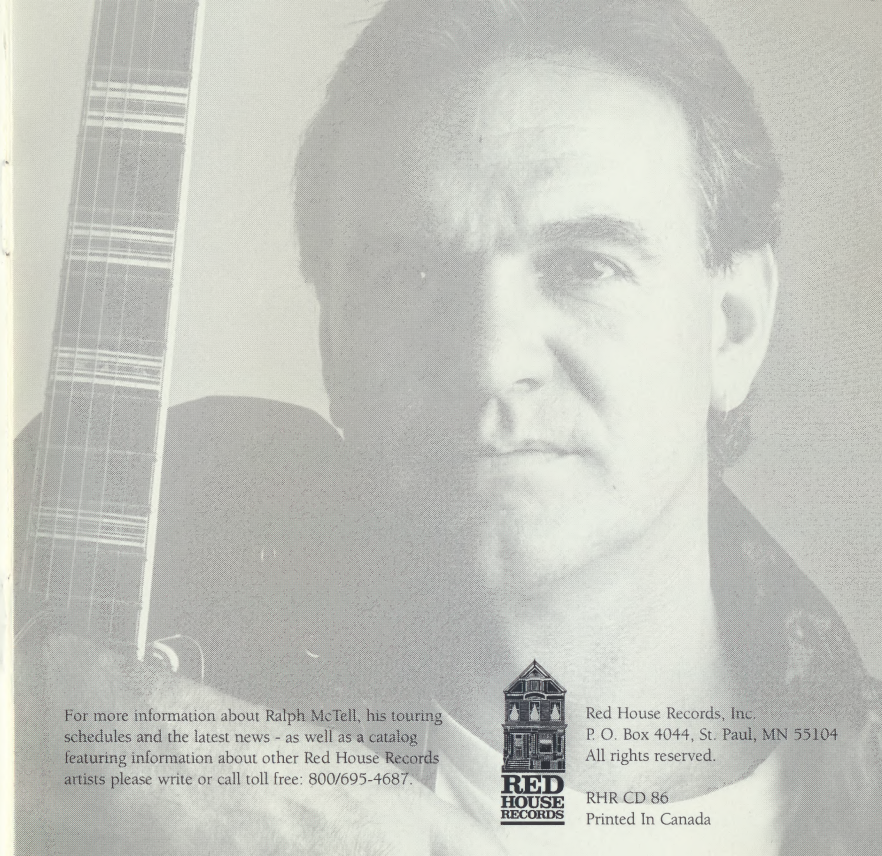
Engineer: Tim Matyear
Graphic Design: Schwartz Powell Design
Minneapolis, USA

Cover Illustration: Andrew Powell
Minneapolis, USA

Back Cover Photo: Courtesy of Anglia Television (UK)

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